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ABSTRACT

Long a controversial topic in the specialized world of reference librarianship, unobtrusive evaluation is a useful tool in gauging the degree to which reference librarians are effectively performing their jobs. Based on a nationwide survey of government documents reference service in Canada, This book examines the broad philosophical implications of negative attitudes to unobtrusive evaluation studies within libraries. It also discusses what really happens when librarians make referrals to external sources. It suggests overlooked ways that may help reference librarians deliver better reference services, and argues that such proposals as certification and re-certification of reference librarians need to be seriously considered if librarians do not willingly take personal responsibility for improving their own knowledge levels. Chapter 1 presents a brief philosophical discussion about some implications of unobtrusive reference service evaluation. Chapter 2 is an extensive discussion of the results of the unobtrusive evaluation of government documents reference service in Canada. Chapter 3 focuses on the proxies themselves and what they experienced at depository libraries as they asked their questions. Chapter 4 examines in detail responses to the questions asked by the proxies. Chapter 5 traces the often sinuous path of many of the referrals proxies received to their original questions. Chapter 6 looks at the value of reading newspapers for library reference personnel through another unobtrusive study of the quality of telephone reference service in large Canadian public libraries. Finally, Chapter 7 offers a series of recommendations for improving the quality of reference service in libraries. Presented throughout the text are 54 figures and tables. Includes author and subject indexes. (Contains 156 references.) (AEF)

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